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LESSON LEARNED

Exercise Logistics: Naming Exercise Locations and Venues to Avoid Confusion

SUMMARY

Exercise planners should avoid naming an exercise location or venue after a real location or venue. Planners can generate confusion by referring to actual locations when responders must report to other locations.

DESCRIPTION

On October 27, 2005, the Midlands region of South Carolina conducted a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) full-scale exercise as part of South Carolina's Three-Year Exercise Plan. The exercise occurred in Aiken and Barnwell counties and involved 451 individuals representing 47 local agencies, 17 state agencies, 4 federal agencies, and 8 private entities. According to the scenario, a team of disgruntled employees conducted an assault and took hostages in a fictitious, privately owned nuclear processing facility. The terrorists also planted an explosive device that detonated on a truck carrying nuclear waste, releasing chemical and radioactive materials at a busy intersection. Exercise planners designed the scenario to evaluate and to improve communications, tactical response skills, and command, control, and coordination of response under the National Response Plan and National Incident Management System.

The Exercise Planning Committee (EPC) generated confusion by naming the exercise venue after a real location. According to the scenario, a tractor-trailer from the nuclear processing facility exploded while stopped at an actual intersection in a South Carolina community. The EPC simulated the accident and the response at an exercise location but named this location after the actual intersection. Although exercise planners implemented measures to negate any confusion between the exercise location and the actual intersection, some agencies and players experienced difficulty making the distinction. Consequently, some responders mistakenly arrived at the actual location instead of the exercise location. This resulted in longer response times than otherwise would have occurred.

Exercise planners should avoid naming an exercise location or venue after a real location or venue. Planners can generate confusion by referring to actual locations when responders must report to other locations.

CITATION

South Carolina Statewide Homeland Security Exercise Program. *After Action Report: Midlands Full Scale Exercise*. 27 Oct 2005.

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